

Table of Contents

CHAPTER TWO - LOCAL CONTEXT

Castle Rocks State Park and its local Context	2-1
Couny Demographics and Economics	2-3
Prehistory and History of the Region	2-4
Cultural History	2-6
Human Relationships with Park Area	2-6
Histories of Castle Rocks State Park and City of Rocks	2-7
National Reserve	
Chronological History of the Park	2-10

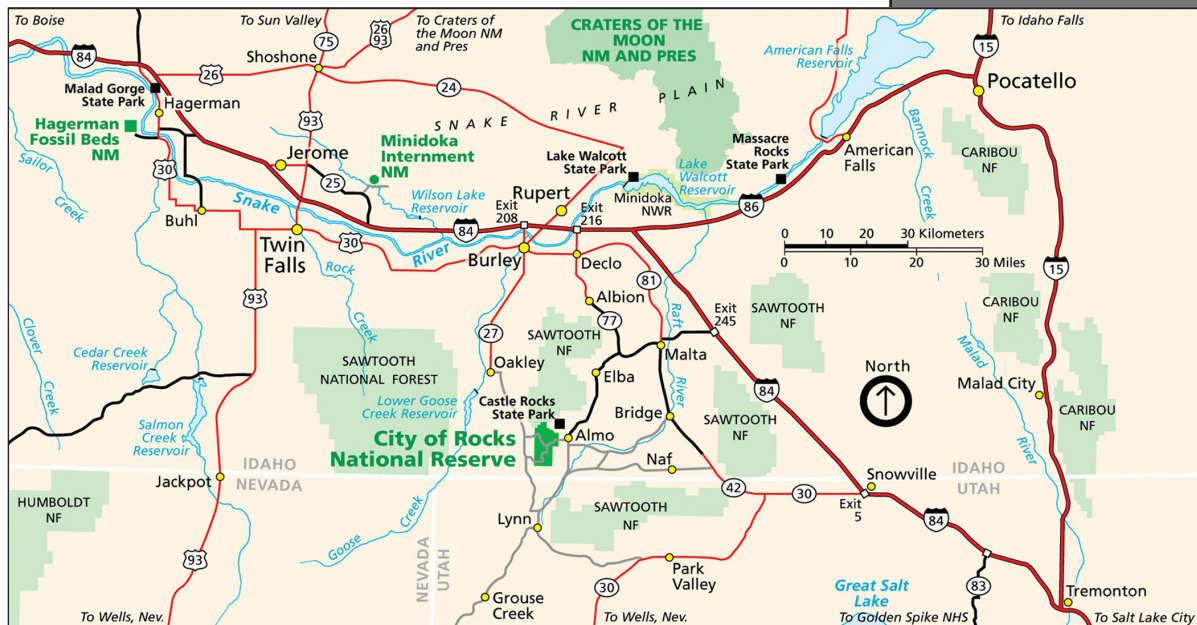
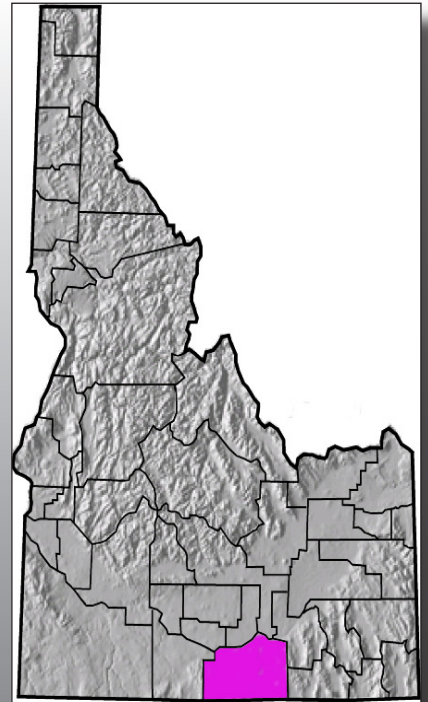
CASTLE ROCKS STATE PARK AND ITS LOCAL CONTEXT

Most of Castle Rocks State Park was once a 1,240 acre cattle ranch in Cassia County in south central Idaho. The park is in the southern part of the county near the border with Utah and Nevada. The picturesque park's most prominent features are the rock spires and granite monoliths, part of the same geologic formation for which the nearby City of Rocks National Reserve is named and one of the reasons it was brought into the national park system.

The landscape of south central Idaho is diverse. Cache Peak, 10,339 feet elevation, is just north of the park. Castle Rocks State

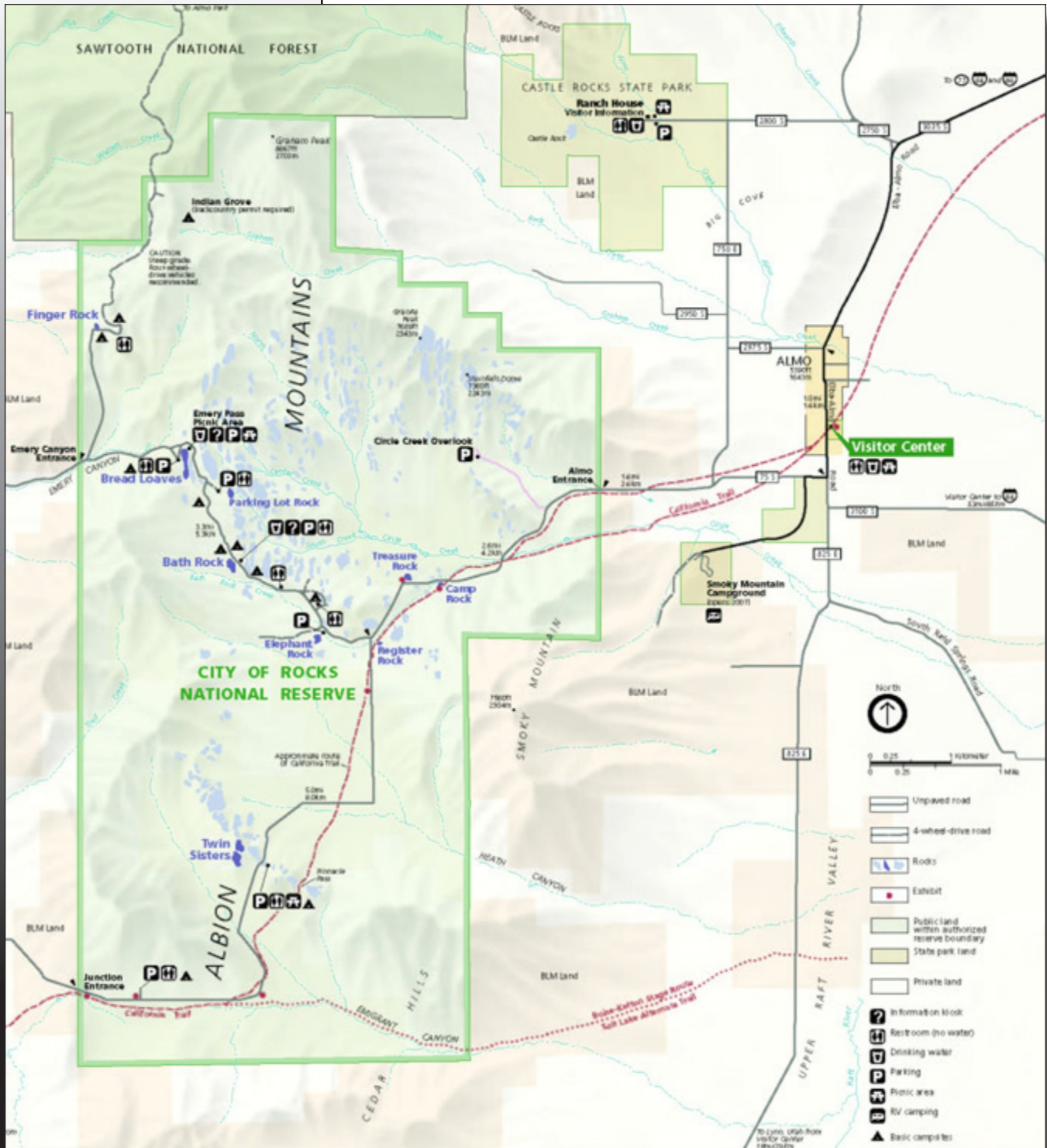
and textural visual contrast not found elsewhere in southern Idaho. The rocks, jutting hundreds of feet above the rolling sagebrush hills, introduce forms and colors that make this area unique.

Cassia County is sparsely populated in its southern reaches. In 2002, it ranked thirteenth among Idaho counties with a population of 21,720. Castle Rocks State Park is approximately equidistant between Albion, a town of nearly 300 people, and Oakley, with close to 700 people. The entire town of Oakley is on the National Register of Historic Places, as an outstanding example of Mormon colonization and late nineteenth-century architecture. Albion also has numerous properties on the National Register of Historic Places



Park is in rolling, sagebrush hills with elevations ranging between 5,360 and 7,400 feet. The northernmost pinyon-juniper stands in the Great Basin add elements of color

including the Albion Methodist Church, the Albion Normal School Campus, and Swanger Hall. The three park units are all within 2 miles of the unincorporated village of Almo.



Castle Rocks State Park Vicinity Map: This shows the relationship between the existing City of Rocks National Reserve and the state park. This map also shows the recreational opportunities and park facilities.

More than half the land in the 2,500 square mile county is in public ownership. The State of Idaho, mostly the Idaho Department of Lands, owns about 3% of the county's land. IDPR owns 1,892 acres. The Sawtooth National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service are the major federal landowners of about 56% of the county. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns land contiguous with the Ranch Unit of Castle Rocks State Park as well as owning the land that makes up the Smoky Mountain Unit. IDPR has leased this land through a Recreation and Public Purpose Act. The City of Rocks National Reserve, 14,407 acres of federal, state and private lands, is as close as one mile to the park.

COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS

There were 21,720 people living in Cassia County in 2002. It ranks 13th among Idaho's 44 counties in population and 9th in area. The growth rate of the county has fluctuated, with a 0.5% increase between 1980 and 1990 and a 9.6% increase between 1990 and 2000. The county is more rural than urban, 56% to 44%. The latest demographic figures are for 2002 (County Profiles of Idaho, www.idahoworks.com).

Agriculture and food processing are major components of the local economy, but so are trade, services and government. In 2000, the top four "employment by industry" categories were services, retail

trade, farm and manufacturing. The unemployment rate in 2002 was 6.4%, in 2001 it was 5.5%, and in 2000 it was 6.2%. Unemployment varies by season. The example is for 2002, when the lowest unemployment rates were in September (5.2%) and October (5.0%), which are farm harvest months. The highest rates were in the winter months of December (8.4%) and January (8.0%).

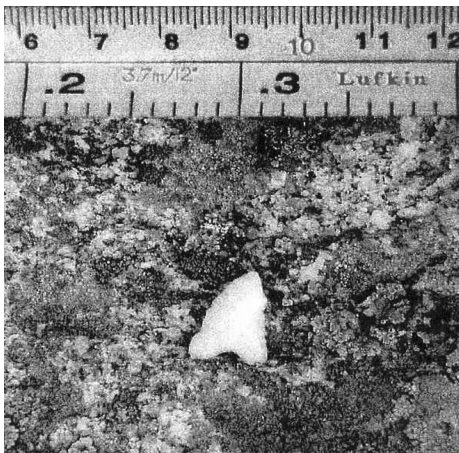
Per capita income in 2001 was \$22,121, which is 73% of the national average. The median age of county residents in 2000 was 31.1, up from 25.3 in 1980. A majority of county residents (53%) are in the 18 to 64 year age bracket.

There are five incorporated cities in the county: Albion, Burley, Declo, Malta, and Oakley. Almo and Elba are both unincorporated villages. Burley is the largest city and the county seat. In 2000, the population was 9,074. Albion, Malta, and Oakley, the incorporated cities closest to Castle Rocks State Park, had 2000 populations of 262 and 668. Albion's population decreased from 305 in 1990. Oakley's population increased from 635 in 1990. Both communities have an older population than the county in general. In Albion the median age in 2000 was 43.2. In Oakley it was 36.1.

A trend across Idaho is the increase in property values. In Cassia County, the median housing value in 1990 was \$46,100. In 2000, the median value had climbed to \$83,100.

Established February 20, 1879 with its county seat at Albion. The county boundaries were later reduced in 1913 by the creation of Twin Falls and Power counties. The county seat was changed to Burley on November 5, 1918. Named for Cassia Creek, which was named for one of two words: cajeaux, peasant French for raft; or James John Cazier, member of the LDS Church and of the Mormon Battalion, later a colorful captain of an emigrant train, whose name was corrupted to cassia. Locally it is also believed that the name is derived from the name of a plant.

*History of Cassia County
- Idaho State University
Digital Atlas*



Example of archeological artifacts present in the Castle Rocks State Park

PREHISTORY AND HISTORY OF THE REGION

The prehistoric record for the planning area is divided into three chronological periods. The Early Prehistoric Period, also known as the Paleo-Indian, dates from at least 12,000 Before Present (BP) to circa 7500 BP. This period is defined by fluted and stemmed projectile point types (Clovis and Scotts Bluff) that are often found in association with now-extinct megafauna and other large game. These hunter-gatherers, along with those of the following period, were highly mobile, with seasonal rounds that followed the migrations of large game herds.

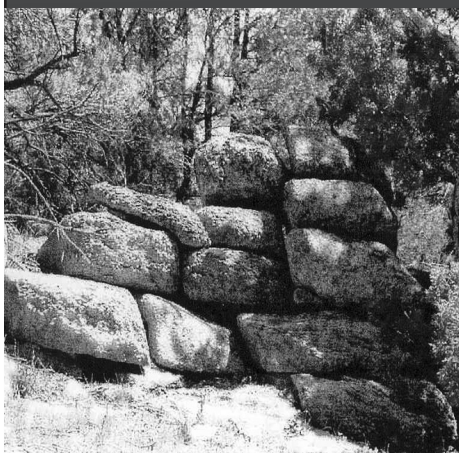
The settlement patterns of the Middle Prehistoric Period (7500 BP to 1500 BP) followed the more localized movements of game and the seasonal availability of plant resources. This period also is defined on the basis of distinct projectile point types (Bitterroot, McKean, and Pelican Lake), and by a subsistence strategy that placed a greater emphasis on the procurement of small game and plant resources (Plew 2000).

The Late Prehistoric Period (1500 to 700 BP) is characterized by the development and use of the bow and arrow, and small corner-notched projectile points. Groups became more sedentary in this period, as evidenced by village occupations typically located in riverine contexts. Because of its abundant plant and animal resources, including pinyon

pine nuts, vegetables and game resources, the upper Raft River area served as a seasonal village center for the Shoshone into the historic period (HRA 1996). The appearance of utilitarian pottery late in the period also is a distinguishing feature. Two different types of pottery have been found in the general vicinity of the planning area - Shoshone and Fremont. The Shoshone pottery is local, whereas the Fremont pottery may be tradeware from points farther south. It is also possible the Fremont pottery-producing people lived in the upper Raft River valley in close proximity to Shoshone.

The introduction of the horse in the 1700s brought further changes that included the exploitation of bison by loose inter-tribal coalitions in Wyoming and Utah (Liljeblad 1960). During the nineteenth century, the Native American groups closest to the planning area were the Shoshone and Bannock, many of whom now live on the Fort Hall Reservation (Liljeblad 1960).

The first Europeans to enter the upper Raft River valley were fur traders. Between 1820 and 1830 the Hudson's Bay Company trapped beaver on the Raft River. By 1820, Mackenzie from the North West Company had established a system of mobile trapping and summer rendezvous sites that included the upper Raft River region. Later incursions into this region were made by the Hudson's Bay Company's Finan McDonald and Michel Bourdon



Example of hunting blind used by past inhabitants in region

in 1823, and Alexander Ross in 1824. Ross camped near the City of Rocks (HRA 1996). The Hudson Bay incursions were part of the Snake River Brigades, large fur trapping expeditions aimed at eliminating American competition on the Snake River plain.

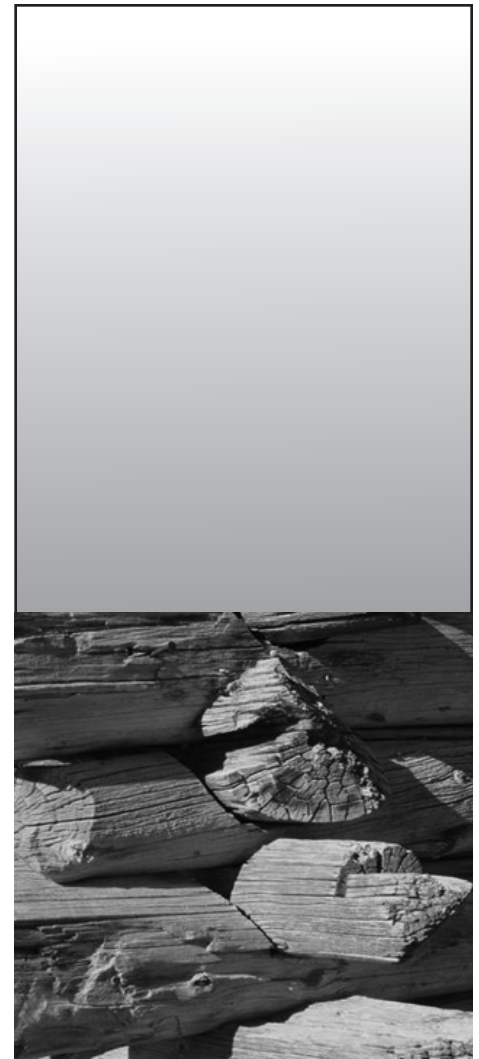
Peter Skene Odgen came to the area in 1824 and took over Ross' operation. At this time American trappers were competing with the British which led to further exploration of the Raft River and its tributaries. Odgen's party discovered Granite Pass in 1826 and Odgen's successor, John Work, explored the Goose Creek area between Junction Valley and Granite Pass. Work concluded that the area immediately west of the Raft River lacked enough beaver resources to warrant further attention (HRA 1996).

The upper Raft River valley is known for the number of overland emigrant trails that pass through the area. In 1842 Joseph B. Chiles traveled from California east and found that Granite Pass at the City of Rocks offered a practical route for California-bound traffic. A party traveled this route the next year under the direction of Walker, a friend of Chiles,' and thereafter regular California-bound emigrants and gold-seekers passed through Granite Pass. By 1846 Oregon-bound emigrants were also using the Granite Pass route as the area provided sheltered campsites with a good water supply and plant resources for the animals.

Native populations, including Pocatello's people, attacked emigrants on the Oregon and California trails. The wagon traffic had affected the Native people's way of life through overgrazing, depletion of game resources, and loss of other food sources in the area. In 1863 Pocatello agreed to negotiate a treaty that provided compensation to the Native population in exchange for unobstructed access to the emigrant routes. Soon after, Pocatello moved his band to the Fort Hall reservation. After that time some Shoshone families continued to travel to the upper Raft River area to collect pinyon nuts (National Park Service 1994).

After the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, a road was developed from Kelton, Utah, to Boise, Idaho to provide a connection for postal service, express, and freight operations between the railroad and the mining communities of southern Idaho. This brought continued traffic through the upper Raft River valley through a stage stop at the City of Rocks until 1882 when the construction of the Oregon Short Line supplanted all stage and freight services through the area.

Cattle ranching began in the area in 1875 partially in response to the growing market for meat needed by nearby mining communities. Quality ranchland was limited in the area surrounding the City of Rocks, which led to population expansion into adjacent areas. Between the late 1870s and the



Detail of construction of log cabins used by early settlers

early 1890s Mormon settlers began to move into adjacent valleys. These agricultural communities depended on water originating from the Albion Mountains.

Crop planting increased in the area between the mid 1890s and the 1920s with the development of new dry farming methods. Grain and hay crops were planted in fields where sagebrush was cleared. In the 1920s a farming recession resulted in a greater emphasis on stock ranching and grazing operations than cultivation. Most of the Ranch Unit was privately owned and operated as a ranch until it was acquired as a state park.

CULTURAL HISTORY

Human presence in this unique landscape has been documented to thousands of years in the past. An archaeological survey of the park in 2001 identified 41 sites, most prehistoric, and more than 80% of them judged to be in excellent to good condition. An object was carbon dated at more than 2,400 years old. The archaeologist attributed the good condition of the sites to the limited access to the property during its private ownership. Most of the archaeological finds indicated hunting and food processing were the major prehistoric human uses in the area.

A programmatic agreement between IDPR and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Idaho State Historical Society, establishes guidelines and responsibilities of

IDPR in planning and development of park properties in relation to archaeological and historic resources (see Appendix 2A).

A comprehensive historic resources study completed in 1996 for the City of Rocks contains information that describes the historical resources of the nearby state park as well. “Distinct historic themes pertinent to the City of Rocks National Reserve include American Indian habitation, the fur trade, westward migration, the development of national and regional transportation networks, agricultural development, and recreation and tourism,” (HRA 1996).

The great waves of people moving east to west along the Oregon and California Trails, created marks on the landscape still visible today. An 1849 traveler, artist James F. Wiaklins on the California Trail reportedly named the City of Rocks. Emigrant diaries document consistent references to castles, spires, pyramids and silent sentinels. Many travelers used axle grease to write their names or messages on the rocks, some of which are still visible. The trail was constricted through the City of Rocks. There was no emigrant trail through the Ranch Unit, but the California Trail travels through both the Administrative and Smoky Mountain Units.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH PARK AREA

The prehistoric evidence found to date, indicates that early people

used the area for hunting and food processing and did not make large, semi-permanent encampments in the area of Castle Rocks. Fur traders came through the area as early as 1826, but did not stay. The travelers on the California and Oregon Trails mostly passed by, intent on getting to their intended destinations before winter.

Hardy Mormon pioneers, extending their range from the Salt Lake area into southern Idaho and northern Utah, began ranching and farming in the area in about the 1870s. By 1882, 35 Mormon families had settled along Almo Creek.

Farming and ranching required roads, diverting water from streams, building houses, out buildings, and fences; planting trees for shade and food; leveling fields, and other activities that changed the landscape. The ranch that became the state park was homesteaded in 1888. The ranch house was built circa 1912. The historic brick structure that serves as the administrative unit for both the state park and national reserve, was originally a ranch house, also built circa 1912.

The oldest, continuously operated mercantile in the state is the Tracy General Store in the unincorporated village of Almo. It was built in 1894. The store is a quarter mile north of the Administrative Unit. Other towns within 40 miles of the park are the Mormon pioneer settlements of Albion, Elba, Malta and Oakley, all settled in the 1870s. Oakley became known as the

religious center for the Mormon pioneers in the area. The Normal School in Albion was a residential campus for teacher training early in the 20th Century. The historic brick buildings are now unused.

HISTORIES OF CASTLE ROCKS STATE PARK AND CITY OF ROCKS NATIONAL RESERVE

The sibling relationship between the City of Rocks National Reserve and Castle Rocks State Park is one of the most important administrative features of the state park. The state park and the national reserve are managed by the same staff. The two units, both of national significance and state significance are related geographically and culturally. Part of Castle Rocks State Park is included in the National Historic Landmark (NHL) (See Appendix 2B) designation that covers the City of Rocks National Reserve. For that reason a history of both parks is appropriate to fully understand the development of Castle Rocks State Park at the present.

In 1941, the Historic Sites Survey conducted by the National Park Service identified the City of Rocks area as a historically significant site along the California Trail. In 1963, this area, incorporating what was to become the City of Rocks National Reserve (See Appendix 2B) was listed as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), under criterion A for its association with events that



Spring runoff from Cache Peak and surrounding Albion Mountains

made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American history.

The City of Rocks National Historic Landmark (NHL) was designated on October 24, 1963. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966. It is listed in History and Prehistory in the National Historic Landmarks Program under theme X, "Western Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898," subtheme D, "Western Trails and Travelers," facet 4 "California Trails and Settlement of California." The area also received a National Natural Landmark designation in 1974. The NHL boundary was revised on August 6, 1987 to encompass some 12,480 acres.

The NHL includes the valley and basins formed by spectacular granite monoliths through which the California Trail and the Salt Lake Alternate Route passed. The landmark boundary includes much of the City of Rocks National Reserve and extends north to include Castle Rock, the end of the stone monolith formations that can be viewed from the California Trail corridor. Overall, the landmark boundary includes about nine miles of the California Trail and Salt Lake Alternate Route corridors comprising some of the best-preserved remnants of overland emigrant routes in the nation.

The next wave of travelers, were from the 1960's to the 1980's

was attracted by the recreational climbing opportunities. This new demand created a need for increased management of the resources in the area. The idea of the reserve designation came about due to the urging of the Oregon-California Trails Association so as to "protect its significant historical and cultural resources...". Legislation was developed and introduced to allow for the creation of a new national reserve. The reserve designation would allow for cooperative management of the area with other agencies. The reserve officially was created on Nov. 18, 1988. City of Rocks is one of only four reserves and only itself and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve are in the National Park system. The reserve offers world-class climbing. Climbers literally come from around the world to scale the spires, rock faces and boulders.

The rocks in the state park were not accessible to the public until the state acquired the property and opened it to climbers and other recreational users on May 23, 2003. The northeast end of the NHL boundary overlays the City of Rocks National Reserve and part of the Ranch Unit. (See the Existing Site Conditions Map.) Lands that are part of the state park and within the NHL boundary are subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

In 1996, a private landowner expressed willingness to sell Castle Rocks Ranch. Mr. Robert Harmish was the current landowner of the

Castle Rocks Ranch, approximately 1,240 acres located about 1.5 miles northeast of the City of Rocks National Reserve. As mentioned before, some of the land was already in the City of Rocks NHL boundary. Although concerned about the possible development of this pristine and historic property, the NPS could not easily move to acquire this property because it is restricted from purchasing land outside the reserve boundary established by Congress.

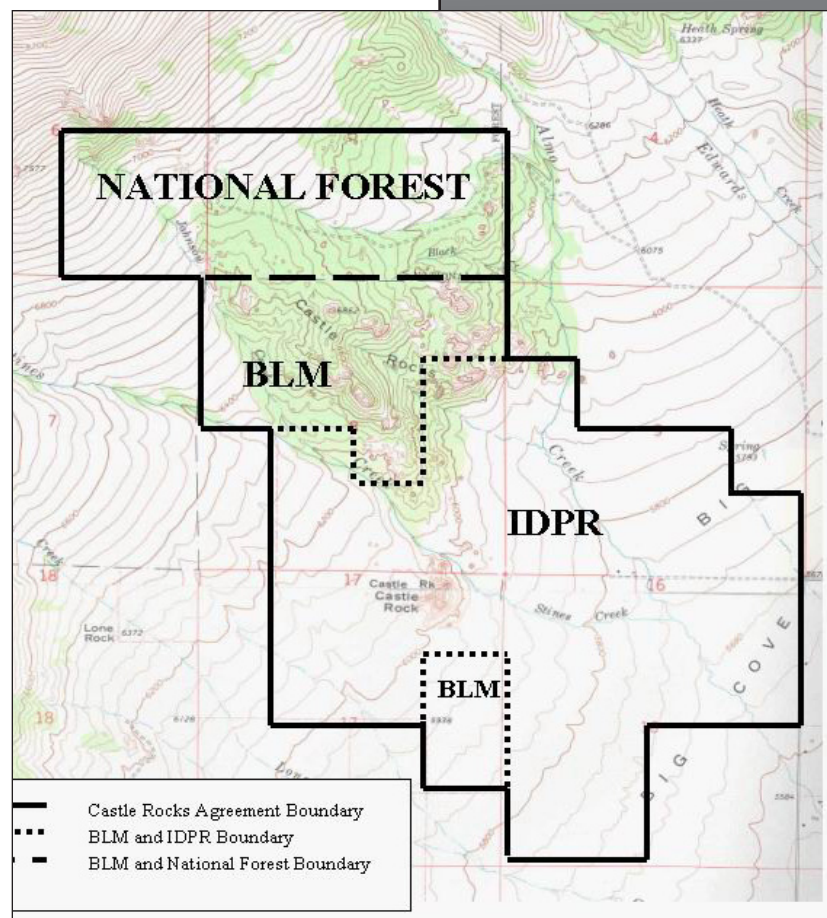
The NPS entered into conversations with IDPR, already working with the NPS to manage the national reserve, to explore the state's capacity to purchase the property. The complicated transaction resulted in NPS purchasing Castle Rocks Ranch and trading it to IDPR for property at Hagerman Fossil Beds, which was transferred from IDPR ownership to the NPS. This land exchange was accomplished with the assistance of the Conservation Fund and the Access Fund. The Conservation Fund purchased the Castle Rocks Ranch and held it until legislation and an appropriation from Congress was authorized to acquire the property.

Officially, the Castle Rocks Ranch Acquisition Act of 2000 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to purchase the 1,240 acre ranch. The purchase was completed on March 15, 2001. The NPS was not authorized to manage the land for recreation or add it to the adjacent national reserve, but instead exchange the property with IDPR.

An environmental assessment by NPS was performed to facilitate this proposed land exchange and was completed in December of 2002. Since May 2003, IDPR has provided park facilities and managed recreation at Castle Rocks State Park. The NPS and IDPR officially signed the exchange agreement on August 21, 2003 (See Appendix 2D).

Also on this date, IDPR, the USDA Forest Service and the BLM signed a Memorandum of Understanding, "to coordinate and combine efforts to manage, protect and interpret public resources and uses in the multi-jurisdictional and geographical area known as Castle Rocks." The Interagency Recreation Area boundary is shown

Illustration showing Ranch Unit and related Interagency Recreation Area boundaries





*View of rock massive at
Ranch Unit*

on the Existing Site Conditions Map. The MOU commits the agencies to share some duties across boundaries, strive for consistent policies, practices and rules for public activity, and jointly develop and implement plans. (See Appendix 2C.)

IDPR entered into a lease with the BLM for approximately 240 acres at nearby Smoky Mountain, which is located between the Ranch Unit and the entrance to the City of Rocks National Reserve. This site is ideally situated to provide camping for Castle Rocks State Park and the City of Rocks National Reserve.

IDPR purchased the acreage which is now the Administrative Unit before acquiring the Ranch

Unit and leasing the Smoky Mountain Unit. It is south and east of the ranch property. This centrally located site serves as the administrative headquarters, visitor center and maintenance area for both the park and the reserve.

Currently, Castle Rocks State Park administratively (IDAPA Code 67-4210 & 67-4212) consists of three named units: the Ranch Unit (1,240 acres) supplemented by 880 acres in the contiguous Interagency Recreation Area; Smoky Mountain Unit (240 acres under Recreation and Public Purposes Lease with the BLM), and the Administrative Unit (12 acres).



The dedication ceremony for Castle Rocks State Park, in August of 2003, was attended by Governor Kempthorne, Senator Craig, State Senator Darrington, State Representative Bedke, County Commissioner Christiansen, as well as leadership and staff from IDPR and NPS. Representation from the Access Fund was also present as they assisted in facilitating the original purchase for the National Park Service.

Chronological History of the Park

- 2000, November 1 – Public Law 106-421 Castle Rocks Ranch Acquisition Act (See Appendix 2E)
- 2001, April 30 – May 5 Archeological field survey
- 2001, May 22 – 24 Castle Rocks Planning Charette
- 2001, August 27 – 31 - Archeological field survey
- 2001, September 24 - Archeological field survey report
- 2002, March 29 - PA between IDPR, NPS, and SHPO
- 2002, December 20 - Castle Rocks Ranch Land Exchange Environmental Assessment
- 2003, January 28 - MOA between SHPO, NPS, and IDPR
- 2003, April 18 - Castle Rocks State Park Climbing Management Plan
- 2003, May 5 - Finding of No Significant Impact for land exchange Environmental Assessment 2003, May 10 – Climbing routes opened by lottery in Castle Rocks State Park
- 2003, May 23 – Castle Rocks State Park opens to the public
- 2003, August 21 - Dedication of Castle Rocks State Park and signing of Exchange Agreement
- 2003, August 26 - Memorandum of Understanding between IDPR, BLM and USFS creates an Interagency Recreational Area
- 2004, July 17 - Ranchfest with concert by Muzzie Braun
- 2004, October 6 - Quitclaim deed signed and official IDPR ownership
- 2005, July 16 – Ranchfest with concert by Clark Ward and the Ridge Runners
- 2005, July 24 – 29 – Archeology field survey
- 2005, March 17 - Master planning for the park begins with an open house



2.1

